

Karon

CAUCASIAN TEACHING STAFF MEETING

Administrative Mess Hall

October 8, 1942.

8:05 P.M.--9:22 P.M.

Mr. Ferguson (8:05--9:22)

Mr. Charles Ferguson, Head of Adult Education, conducted the meeting which was attended by forty-five to fifty people. He stated that the last meeting came out of a bull session which was held on a lawn between two barracks. He gave a brief review of the last meeting. In regard to the previous meeting, he said that a teacher stopped him to say that the people of Japanese ancestry should not indulge in self-pity, but that they should look forward and plan for what comes next.

Mr. Ferguson stated then that Mr. Harvey M. Coverley, Acting Project Director, was to speak although he did not have time to plan a formal talk. He was supposed to talk of that which happened after December 7, 1941, how the Japanese came to be evacuated, the aims and purposes of the War Relocation Authority, and the future of the W.R.A.

Mr. Coverley (8:10--8:47)

Mr. Coverley first defined enemy and friendly aliens. He stated that enemy aliens have no rights whatsoever. Friendly aliens, citizens of countries which are not at war with this country, have the personal and civil rights of citizens with the exception that the freedom of the person can be infringed upon to further the war effort. Citizens retain all rights as during peace time with certain important exceptions. There may be certain restrictions placed on activities, and persons may be compelled to sacrifice privileges and property. Measures which infringe on rights may be taken as long as such measures are necessary in order that the purposes of the conflict may be best served. Anyone can be required to move--to evacuate if the officers in charge think it necessary. However, every citizen has the right to go to court for a review of action to be taken. Then, the court will decide upon the reasonableness of the action.

Sometime in the latter part of January or the early part of February, the President issued a Proclamation allowing certain powers to military officials. That order was applicable to everyone. Since no order need be issued for enemy aliens, so the orders actually apply to everyone.

The reasoning behind the actions taken by General DeWitt has not been clarified. Perhaps, cases now in the Federal Courts will help in that respect. According to talks which Mr. Coverley had with various military officers, they felt that they recognized the fact that there are many people of Japanese ancestry whose loyalty, culture, friends, and all attachments are American. However, they feel that there are hidden ties and potentials lying underneath which might turn the people away from the part of civilization to which they belong to something else. In event of war, if the soldiers of the Mikado are attacking the coast, will the people be sticking to the American side or will they turn to the land where they have ties? Another possibility is that the Japanese soldiers can mix with the Japanese citizenry here. People will not be able to distinguish between the two because the people in the East cannot even tell the difference between persons of Japanese and Chinese ancestry.

How reasonable was this assumption? That cannot be decided here; however, it must come to decision sometime because even now, writs of habeas corpus are pending in the courts of the United States.

The order for evacuation was given and evacuation was conducted on a voluntary basis. At first, there was no definite time limit set. Surprisingly enough, there was no great rush to leave the zones. Probably, the number leaving did not exceed 15,000 and of that, about two thirds (very rough estimate) just went to the edge of or a few miles past the boundaries of the military zone. The bulk of the other one third went on to Colorado or to Utah where they settled in large numbers. After a while, it was felt that where evacuation was not planned or directed, local hostilities, confusion, and possible violence might arise. Further, at the time of national crisis, it seemed unwise to have this evacuation conducted in "willy nilly" fashion. In the latter part of March--the 29th--no one else was allowed to move voluntarily.

Shortly before, it was decided that if evacuation was to be guided, it should be under the administration of civilians. On March 18, the President issued the orders creating the War Relocation Authority. In the opinion of military officers, time did not permit the recruiting and training of civilians, so it was decided that the military leaders guide the program first and then gradually turn it over to civilian authorities. Also, it was strongly felt that building facilities could not be erected quickly enough. Because of that, temporary places called assembly centers were established in fair grounds, ball parks, racing parks, and in other recreational grounds because these places had more access to power, water, and sanitary facilities. These places were made ready after a fashion to receive evacuees--some were comfortable and others were poorly equipped.

The military authorities hastily created the Wartime Civilian Control Administration which consisted of the W.P.A., the United States Employment Service, the Social Security Board, the Farm Securities Administration, and the Federal Reserve Banks. The Employment Service helped with the planning and offered office spaces. The Social Securities Board assisted with social workers. The Farm Securities Administration arranged for the disposal of agricultural assets. The Federal Reserve Banks aided in the resettlement and disposal of real and personal properties of urban areas.

The evacuation proceeded through March, April, May, and part of June. In the meantime, construction of relocation centers went on ahead. During the latter part of June, the people began to move from assembly to relocation centers. Manzanar is the only center which has the distinction--which is perhaps dubious--of being both assembly and relocation center.

In the latter part of May, the W.R.A. came into Manzanar and by the fifteenth of June, the W.C.A. was out. By the end of this month, the last assembly center will be a thing of the past and all ten of the relocation centers will be operating.

As regarding the objectives of the W.R.A., it was pointed out that this is a new organization dealing with a new and unprecedented problem of America. Hence, "No single policy can be set down as a cast iron policy, but as Dillon S. Myer said at the staff meeting yesterday, if we have any broad policies, it is this: These people of Japanese ancestry are assets and have made many contributions to this country.....They should have the same opportunities as have any other foreign groups."

It was then stated that according to many opinions, it was felt that the people of Japanese ancestry have made an unconscious mistake in that they did not assimilate and that they formed colonies here and there.

Mr. Coverley said, "We want to get as many of the evacuees out as possible--not in large numbers--to take their places in regular American communities so that they will be known as good Americans, good citizens, good neighbors, and good friends." The first ones will help prepare the American mind for the assimilation and absorption of more people of Japanese ancestry. Not all will be able to leave centers, but Mr. Coverley hoped that a substantial proportion will have that opportunity.

Some people will go to all the places possible. In other words, the evacuees will be scattered throughout the United States. Hope was expressed that those who go out do so with a feeling of heavy obligations since they represent not only themselves but their families, friends, and all who are left in the centers.

New regulations regarding permanent outside relocation will be arriving soon. In this, relocation is placed second only to essentials of center life such as, food, fire, and police services, sanitation, water, and so forth. Relocation will be placed ahead of furlough work in beet fields, construction of shows, camouflage net work, clothing factories, etc. The requirements for permanent relocation have been changed to include not only the Nisei but also the Issei. Now, the officials will not require jobs in advance or recommendations from influential people. All that will be required will be a place to go where friends are living or a place to go for a job; however, there must be a definite place to go. Also, reasonable assurances that the people will be accepted and assimilated will be wanted.

Mr. Ferguson (8:47--8:48)

Mr. Ferguson expressed his appreciations to Mr. Coverley and then asked if there were any questions. Mr. Coverley answered the questions.

Q. Reference was made to court cases, who were they?

A. Cases are coming up in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The Los Angeles case involves a couple from Manzanar. Mr. Coverley felt quite sure that there were a number of others.

Q. What was the origin of the name of Manzanar?

A. The name was not given by anyone to this camp. Once, it was a village and an apple raising country. Manzanar, in Spanish, means apple. From the floor, it was stated that prior to Manzanar, the village was named Doris and then later changed.

Q. When assembly center houses are torn down, will they be used for homes here?

A. Santa Anita, Stockton, and other centers will be used by the army as training centers and for other uses, mostly for quartering soldiers. The other places will be torn down and the salvage may be given in part to the W.R.A.

Q. Are there any plans for increasing the houses and allow for more privacy?

A. There will be more privacy probably. When the school is built, that will release many buildings. There will also be new housing for administrative personnel. Also, many people are and will be trickling out for relocation.

Q. Would it be advisable to go on building schools as planned when there will be more relocation?

A. The rooms will be movable and they can be sent to small communities. Furthermore, the plans call for a smaller capacity than would be planned if this were to be a permanent community.

Q. What is the W.R.A. doing to help prepare the way for acceptance on the outside?

A. The W.R.A. is not doing anything directly in that phase; however, it is working with various church groups.

Mr. Temple (9:05--9:15)

Mr. Temple (who entered a little late) spoke of race problems which are the result of concentration of one racial group in a certain sector. He stressed the fact that the young Japanese must realize that they have to be assimilated.

Mr. Temple felt that the schools should teach other things beside the "three R's" and the "A, B, C's." He likes to have things done nicely and correctly and feels that this is necessary. He expressed his opinion that the boys and girls are not very well equipped to make a living. The Japanese must be able to do something well and not in a halfway or slipshod fashion. Hence, the teachers must be practical in their training of the youngster.

It was pointed out that all Japanese are not servants (the topic for discussion previously being about Japanese servants) by any means. They are in that occupation as "the Americans are--or should be."

Then a case involving a group of chick sexers was cited where a vigilanted group was organized by the Japanese people themselves to take care of them. It was disclosed that one Japanese person was put in jail for two years for slapping a white waitress.

In view of the fact that unpleasant things can happen, it was deemed necessary to send out at first only the good people. These people must "be plenty courageous and brave enough to go out successfully."

Then after a few more minutes of discussions interspersed with bits of humor, the meeting was adjourned by Mr. Ferguson at 9:22 P.M.

P.H.K.